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ABSTRACT

With an increasingly wide variety of programs currently labeling themselves "civic education" and being taught by civic educators, the question at hand is how the culture of schools and classrooms contribute to supporting democratic political culture. This paper explores the questions: "Does the structure of the school and classroom have the potential to encourage the development of democratic citizens?" and "Is a school or a classroom organized in an authoritarian manner less likely to encourage the development of skills and attitudes that are democratic?" by making assumptions that how individuals conduct classroom instruction and provide opportunities to practice participation and structure power relations in the school have important consequences in promoting a culture of democracy. Specific paper sections include: (1) "Democratic Citizenship and Education: Making the Connections"; (2) "Promoting a Culture of Democracy: Democratic Practices and Democratic Citizens"; (3) "Education for Democracy: Which Democracy?"; (4) "Democratic Classrooms and Schools: How Democratic Do They Need To Be?"; and (5) "Conclusions: Towards Greater Clarity." (CB)

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Political Culture in the School and Classroom: Does It Matter?

by Steven Fleischman

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Political Culture in the School and Classroom: Does it Matter?

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Presented at:

"Individualism and Community in a Democratic Society"
Washington, DC
October 1996

> The teacher shall inculcate by PRECEPT and EXAMPLE respect for religion and the principles of Judaeo-Christian morality and the highest regard for truth, justice, loyalty, love of country, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, purity, temperance and ALL OTHER VIRTUES.
>
> *Education Act of Ontario, Canada (sec. 235, [1,c])*

Introduction

The question at hand is how the culture of schools and classrooms contribute to supporting democratic political culture. Creating a "democratic school culture" is for many one of the most important elements in the promotion of democracy. Indeed, there a some who so strongly believe this that they take part in the "democratic school" movement, which is active both in the U.S. and abroad.

Does the structure of the school and classroom have the potential to encourage the development of democratic citizens? Is a school or a classroom organized in an "authoritarian" manner less likely to encourage the development of skills and attitudes that are democratic? The answer to these questions *seem* to be yes. Certainly, for most civic educators an affirmative answer to these questions is a working assumption. Thus, many of our colleagues in the field are actively working in projects that are meant to reform and democratize classrooms and schools.

While the matter is not entirely settled, and much hard effort lies ahead, programs of education for democracy seem to be enjoying ever increasing worldwide support. The institutionalization of the CIVITAS movement; the recognition of the importance of civic education by international and regional organizations such as the Interamerican Development

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Bank, the World Bank, UNESCO and the Council of Europe; and the growing interest in the subject shown by many ministries of education all support this observation.

How we prepare the young to assume their roles as citizens is a central question in all free societies. And civic educators seem to be winning the battle for the acceptance of the notion that citizenship must systematically be taught as a subject in elementary and secondary schools. It appears that civic education will be a *growth industry* for the next several years.

However, civic educators will have answer a series of hard questions. Some of these concern how we conceptualize our goals; others how we might most effectively promote these goals. It is a measure of our recent success that in the future we will have to face increasingly difficult questions.

In this paper I wish to explore some of the questions raised by making the assumptions that how we conduct classroom instruction, provide opportunities to practice participation and structure power relations in the school have important consequences in promoting a culture of democracy.

Asking these questions raises larger ones as well. Is there such a thing as democratic political culture? If so, what are its attributes? Can schools promote this democratic culture? When we speak of promoting democratic citizenship what ideal do we have in mind? What are the most important attributes of the citizenship which we are trying to promote? All of these questions need to be answered if we are going to be effective agents in the promotion of education for democracy.

Democratic Citizenship and Education: Making the Connections

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Pericles described some of the attributes of an ideal democratic citizen. Speaking of Athens, he observed with pride:

> Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics--this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all.

In this passage Pericles has already identified some of the key attributes of good citizenship which the *U.S. National Standards for Civics and Government* label "civic dispositions." Among those "traits of private and public character . . . important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy", the *Standards* list the following private traits; moral responsibility, self-discipline, and respect for individual worth and

human dignity, and public ones; public spiritidness, civility, respect for law, critical mindedness, and a willingness to negotiate and compromise.

It is a truism that in a democracy, government is the business of citizens. Today, the need for effective education for democratic citizenship is rarely questioned. It is seen as one of the key components in promoting the civic dispositions to which we have just referred. This is not just the case in the U.S., for throughout the world, civic education -- both formal and informal -- is championed by non-governmental organizations and governments alike as a key component in the creation or revitalization of democracy. But, it is exactly *because* of this unanimity that civic educators will face serious challenges in conceptualizing our goals, and providing convincing support for our suggested courses of instruction.

In making these points in support of education for democracy, I myself am repeating observations made almost 150 years ago by the American educator, Horace Mann. Mann wrote that the necessity of education;

> under a republican form of government, like most other very important truths, has become a very trite one. It is so trite, indeed, as to have lost much of its force by its familiarity. Almost all the champions of education seize upon this argument, first of all; because it is so simple as to be understood by the ignorant, and so strong as to convince the skeptical. Nothing would be easier than to follow in the train of so many writers, and to demonstrate, by logic, by history, and by the nature of the case, that a republican form of government, without intelligence in the people, must be, on a vast scale, what a mad-house, without superintendent or keepers, would be, on a small one; -- the despotism of a few succeeded by universal anarchy, and anarchy by despotism, with no change but from bad to worse.

Having said this, Mann then provides an eloquent justification for universal education and political education, that ranks among the best ever offered. A few passages will give the sense of the power of his argument:

> . . . [S]hould intelligence desert the halls of legislation, weakness, rashness, contradiction, and error should glare out from every page of the statute book. Now, as a republican government represents almost all interests, whether social, civil or military, the necessity of a degree of intelligence adequate to the due administration of them all, is so self-evident, that a bare statement if the best argument.

Mann then adds that:

> In a republican government, legislators are a mirror reflecting the moral countenance of their constituents. And hence it is, the establishment of a republican government, without well-appointed and efficient means for the universal education of the people, is the most rash and fool-hardy experiment every tried by man. Its fatal results may not be immediately developed, -- they may not follow as the thunder follows the lightning, -- for time is an element in maturing them, and the calamity is too great to be prepared in a day; but, like the slow-accumulating avalanche, they will grow more terrific by delay, and, at length, though it may be at a late hour, will overwhelm with ruin whatever lies athwart their path. It may be an easy thing to make a Republic; but it is a very laborious thing to make Republicans: and woe to the republic that rests upon no better foundation than ignorance, selfishness and passion.

Finally, Mann make the case for the necessity of political education in order to preserve and strengthen democracy.

> However elevated the moral character of a constituency may be; however well informed in matters of general science or history, yet they must, if citizens of a Republic, understand something of the true nature and functions of the government under which they live. That any one who is to participate in the government of a country, when he becomes a man, should receive no instruction respecting the nature and functions of the government he is afterwards to administer, is a political solecism. . . [I]n a government where the people are the acknowledged source of power, the duty of changing laws and rulers by an appeal to the ballot, and not by rebellion, should be taught to all children until they are fully understood.

While in this passage Mann emphasized the *knowledge* of the "true nature and functions of government", more recently educators have come to place particular emphasis on the *skills* and *dispositions* necessary for effective democratic citizenship. As civic educators have begun to focus on these aspects of citizenship, they have also emphasized the need to use appropriate teaching methodologies and create supportive learning environments for teaching democracy. For some educators it has even become an article of faith that "you cannot teach democracy unless the classroom and school are *truly* democratic."

Promoting a Culture of Democracy: Democratic Practices and Democratic Citizens

Is there a culture of democracy? If so, can it be promoted by education? Although as civic educators we would answer in the affirmative, these questions remain open.

At the societal or "macro" level, the theory of the "civic culture" and its contribution to democracy has been debated since its formulation in 1963 by Almond and Verba. A recent scholarly article by Muller and Seligson, "Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships", calls into question whether enough evidence exists to support the civic culture thesis.

According to Muller and Seligson, Almond and Verba and their supporters, posit that "the viability of democratic institutions is affected powerfully by attitudes such as belief in one's ability to influence political decisions, feelings of positive affect for the political system, and the belief that other citizens are basically trustworthy. Countries with high levels of these civic culture attitudes are expected to be more likely to adopt and sustain democracy over time than countries with low levels, regardless of socioeconomic factors such as levels of economic development." However, as Muller and Seligson rightly point out, without the supporting data, "The hypothesis that democracy causes civic culture would seem a priori to be as plausible as the hypothesis that civic culture causes democracy."

After a thorough testing of cross-national data the authors conclude that, "[O]verall, the result of our analysis of causal linkages between levels of civic culture attitudes and change in level of democracy are not supportive of the thesis that civic culture attitudes are the principal or even major cause of democracy." For example, they conclude that "[l]ow levels of interpersonal trust do not appear to be an impediment to democratization." Instead, the authors find that the most important determinant of democratization was income inequality.

The study argues that, transitions from authoritarian to democratic systems (in Argentina, Portugal, Spain) were "facilitated by the existence of relatively egalitarian distributions of income." Even in instances where some of the attitudes reflective of a civic culture are found to exist, such as the positive correlation between support for gradual reform (as opposed to revolutionary action) and democratization, the authors argue that they may not be significant. They suggest that that the focus of future studies on political culture and democratization might be shifted away for the population as a whole to the attitudes of elites, since they "have a greater opportunity and ability than the general public to influence the kind of regime a country will have."

I dwell on this study, not because it is the final word on the connection between political culture and democratization, but because it points to central questions and issues that we as civic educators have not yet adequately addressed. At the "macro" level, at least, it raises serious questions about the importance of civic education in building democracy. If our justification for civic education is that it promotes a "culture of democracy" but we cannot show that this culture has a significant positive correlation with democratization, we have a problem. If this correlation

does not exist, it does not matter what shape our civic education programs take -- participatory vs. passive, focused on institutions and process vs. skills and attitudes, etc. -- they will still be irrelevant.

Civic educators need more empirical support for their argument that the knowledge, skills and attitudes they teach do indeed promote democracy. If not, policy makers seeking guidance on this issue and looking at the existing literature might conclude, for example, that actions to reduce income inequality a country might go much further in insuring the longevity of democracy than *any* conceivable educational program. It may be that civic education only makes *marginal* contributions to democratization.

This study should also sensitize educators to the need to conduct rigorous, empirically based research on the connection between civic education and democracy. As policymakers pay more attention to us, we will have to find better justification for the programs we promote. In the case of the topic of this paper, the connection between classroom and school "climate" and the promotion of democracy, it will not do for us to simply conclude that there is an unquestionable connection between the two. Systematic study may establish that "democratic" schools and classrooms do little to promote democratic citizenship or democracy. Of course, we believe that they do, but where is our proof?

Education for Democracy: Which democracy?

The requirement of rigor extends to the need to precisely establish what we mean when we say that our programs promote democratic citizenship. There are many attributes of democratic citizenship (willingness to actively engage in community and political life, readiness to cooperate and compromise, commitment to political tolerance, etc.) and when civic educators refer to citizenship they may each be describing a different constellation of these attributes. This matters because in order to design our instructional programs, we must be able to clearly specify our desired outcomes. This cannot happen if we are either unclear about, or cannot agree on our goals.

The point here is that as civic educators may only have a *seeming* consensus about our goals. We need to clarify this issue, not because we need to have absolute agreement, but because we must understand on what points we agree or disagree. This requires drawing sharp lines between positions, debating them, and foremost, substantiating them with logic and evidence. We have not sufficiently engaged in this activity.

Some the views concerning civic education expressed by the American political theorist William Galston in *Liberal Purposes* serve to illustrate the point concerning the need for clarity. Galston asks the question: "Liberal-democratic civic education may be *necessary*, but is it *possible*?" His answer reveals some of the ongoing debate concerning this matter *within* the civic education community.

Galston contrasts his point of view, with that of a leading American civic educator and theorist, Amy Gutmann. According to Galston:

> Her point of departure is democracy, and her argument is that our civic pedagogy should be oriented towards democratic virtue: "the ability to deliberate, and hence to participate in conscious social reproduction."

For Galston, "this is a piece -- but only a piece -- of the civic education appropriate to our situation, and it becomes a distortion when it is mistaken for the whole."

I will review his disagreement with Gutmann as I believe it has important ramifications for how we structure civic education in our schools. Galston begins with a methodological point: "The adequacy of a conception of civic education cannot be determined in the abstract, but only through its congruence with the basic features of the society it is intended to sustain." To do otherwise according to Galston is "to endorse a politics of transformation based on a general conception of the political good external to the polity in question." And, he reminds us that the task at hand is "fitting pedagogical practices to existing communities."

The author offers four objections to the acceptance of Gutmann's approach to civic education. His first objection is that the "disposition to respect rights and privacies" is not sufficiently encouraged by Gutmann's formulation of democracy. Galston fears that her conception do not adequately protect "individuals and groups against the possibility of majority usurpation."

A second objection is that Gutmann's position does not sufficiently distinguish between "momentary public whim and the settled will -- that is, the considered judgment -- of the community." In most democracies, even "the people" themselves (as expressed by majority rule) are constrained by a constitution which establishes certain enduring institutions and procedures. A key feature of constitutional democracy is limited government. Thus, according to Galston, the promotion of "conscious social reproduction" as favored by Gutmann should be qualified by a form of civic education that teaches the limits of societal changes that even majorities may contemplate.

Galston's third point builds on the recognition that "in liberal democracies, representative institutions replace direct self-government for many purposes." Therefore, much of the knowledge and skills imparted to youngsters should concentrated on teaching "the virtues and competences needed to select representatives wisely, to relate to them appropriately, and to evaluate their performance in office soberly." These skills can differ in major ways from those needed for direct participation in politics. Galston then makes a crucial point whose import is worthy of a debate among civic educators. He points out that:

> . . . [T]he balance between participation and representation is not a settled question for us, in either theory of practice. A civic pedagogy for us may rightly incorporate participatory virtues. It

> may even accommodate a politics more hospitable to participation than are our current practices. But it is not free to give participatory virtues pride of place or to remain silent about the virtues that correspond with representative institutions.

This point has major implications for the structuring of our schools and classrooms. For, if we accept Galston's critique of Gutmann, it follows that restructuring schools and classrooms to make them more democratic -- presumably to teach the competences associated with participation -- may be less important than some would argue.

The final point is less relevant for our discussion but bears repeating. Galston points out that "in liberal democracies, certain kinds of excellences are acknowledged, at least for certain purposes, to constitute legitimate claims to public authority." This is a reminder that even in a democracy where all are equal, some are still recognized as being more fit to serve in positions of public authority than others. This argues against a certain kind of radical egalitarianism that may be promoted by some citizens and civic educators. Galston argues that properly constructed, civic education should "aim to engender not only the full range of public excellences but also the widest possible acceptance of the need for such excellences in the conduct of our public life."

To summarize, if we accept Galston's view, then there are at least two important implications for how we conceptualize civic education. The first is that its purpose is, as Sidney Hook phrased it, "to inspire loyalty to the process of self-government . . . through honest inquiry into the functioning of a democratic community, by learning its history, celebrating its heroes, and noting its achievements." That is, democracy should not be taught at one among many choices concerning government and society, but as the best choice yet known to humankind.

The second point, somewhat related to the first, is that we should be teaching students how to participate in a *representative* democracy. This means that in some instances the knowledge, skills and values we should emphasize and transmit might not the be the same as those that might be chosen by educators who wish to promote *participation* as the highest value in a democracy. (Among the skills we might list under the category are included those which help citizens to make intelligent choices from among competing candidates and policy alternative, monitor the activities of government officials, discuss issues, etc.)

Education for democracy should prepare the young to be *citizens*, but not necessarily to become *activists* (or in current parlance, *agents of change*). Of course students should be free to become activists, but this should not be the main purpose of civic education. I am not arguing for the promotion of *conformity* or *passivity* (the main goals of *authoritarian* civic education), but rather a reaffirmation that the goal of civic education is the U.S. should be the promotion of a reasoned allegiance to democracy, and to the development of the capacity to undertake that allegiance.

I return here to a discussion I began in a paper delivered to *the International Conference on Making Democracy Work*, held in October 1995 in Bonn. In that paper I pointed out that there are several models of democracy, and that civic educators might be carrying around

different conceptions of democracy when they promote their educational programs. The distinction between *participatory* and *pluralist* conceptions of democracy is particularly salient.

For those who hold the *participatory* viewpoint, extensive participation by individuals -- in governmental and nongovernmental settings -- is the ultimate measure of democracy. The *pluralist* conception on the other hand assumes that since "the political elite will make actual policy decisions, the role of democratic citizens lies primarily and almost exclusively in their capacity to choose among alternative political leaders . . . Elections are important , then, not because they provide *direct* citizen involvement in governance, but because they allow citizens to choose who their rulers will be."

On the whole, I agree more with a modified version of the *pluralist* conception. In part this is due to a distrust of a kind of citizen activism which is not grounded in democratic principles, including civility and respect for law. Another reason is that *participatory* democracy often imposes an unrealistic, and sometimes unfair, set of expectation on what it means to be a citizen in a democracy. Years ago, speaking about *participatory* democracy, in the context of the trade union movement, Tom Kahn made this point:

> Participatory democracy as an idea has totalitarian tendencies, because it doesn't recognize the right of people to be left alone and not go to meetings. There are some people that love to go to meetings . . . And that is fine for those people. But other people have the right not to go to meetings . . . .I don't blame union members who do not go to meetings, because meetings are boring. All meetings do not take strike votes. When strike votes are coming up, when the contract is debated, you will get full participation. . . . The point it that to be effective, unions and other mediating structures do not have to be participatorily democratic in an agitated way.

The main point of these observations is that we must be careful to identify and clearly enunciate the assumptions we are making and the goals we are pursuing through civic education. There may be reasonable differences of opinion and emphasis on these questions. However, we cannot discuss our differences unless we can identify them. These difference can have important consequences for civic education, and for democracy itself.

Democratic Classrooms and Schools: How democratic do they need to be?

Notwithstanding what has been argued above, an important function of civic education *is* to prepare youngsters for *active and effective participation* in democracy. And, there is a seeming consensus among civic educators that, in the teaching of the knowledge, skills and values related to this aspect of democratic citizenship as well as to the many others, *how* we teach often matters as much as *what* we teach. Since John Dewey's time it has also been argued that in order to learn democracy, students must have the opportunity to *experience* and *practice*

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democracy. Typical of this viewpoint, is the statement by Conway, Damico and Damico, who, in their study on the role of school structures in teaching tolerance wrote:

> . . . [W]e believe that an education for democracy that has as its aim a more tolerant citizenry must practice tolerance in order to teach it. In other words, we look at the classroom first as a miniature community and the school as responsible for the organization of what occurs in that community so as to promote tolerance. Simply put, schools cannot teach tolerance unless tolerance is practiced.

Many elements comprise what educators mean by a democratic school environment, among some most commonly cited are:

- A *classroom atmosphere* that, according to Meyer, promotes "(1) a positive sense of self worth, (2) an atmosphere of trust, and (3) an atmosphere of respect,"

- *Teaching practices* that encourage student cooperation, participation, decision making, autonomy, the development of leadership skills; and

- A *school structure* which according to Torney-Purta adheres to democratic "rules, norms, and modes of authority."

Myer's assertions concerning classroom environment and the development of democratic values can be applied to all of the dimensions mentioned above. He argues that:

> Teachers will have to engage in activities that promote confidence, well-being, positive self-regard, justice and responsibility. These instructional activities involve active listening, class or group consensus, discussion of classroom regulation, group discussion dynamics, sensitivity to biases and prejudices, trust building, role playing, problem solving, respectful sharing of feelings and the formulation of codes and rules.

In a review of U.S. and cross-national studies in the field, the justification for this approach was presented by Torney-Purta and Schwille as one of their seven major assertions concerning the teaching democratic values. According to them, "The learning of values in school is not limited to programs of moral and civic education. Students also learn values (especially cooperation, rights of self-expression, respect for others, and respect for authority) from the ways that schools embody these values in organization, teaching practice, and social climate."

Finally, Ted Kalstounis recently summarized what we might consider the "consensus view" concerning the types of teaching approaches that best contribute to effective education for democracy. He writes:

> . . . [I]n the final analysis, democracy is a way of life. Knowledge alone is not enough to ensure a democratic way of life. This is especially true of the knowledge conveyed through the current social studies curriculum: "The formal social studies curriculum has little appreciable effect on civic attitudes and behavior" (Ferguson, 1991, p. 392). On the other hand, reviews of research reveal that hands-on activities, open discussion and appraisal of public issues, and the climate or ethos of the school contribute significantly to the development of democratic attitudes and behaviors (Patrick and Hoge, 1991).

Although most civic educators subscribe to this consensus view, research findings present a mixed picture as to the effectiveness of various approaches. Based upon her review of research conducted in the 1970s, Torney-Purta asserted in 1986, "No Western industrialized country has had a uniformly high level of success in transmitting civic values."

In the early 1990s, Orit Ichilov, an Israeli researcher, in a review of the literature, observed:

> . . . [E]mpirical evidence concerning schooling effects on the development of political orientation of children and adolescents is far from unequivocal. Surveys of adults show a clear relationship between educational attainment and a variety of citizenship orientations and behaviors such as support of democratic values, political participation, voting behavior, and being politically informed. Paradoxically, however, overall school-related variables, such as civic curriculum and teachers' qualifications, yield only moderate, immediate and long-run effects on youngsters' citizenship orientation.

Related to this are several assertions that the "traditional" approach to civic education (based on lecture, rote memorization, reliance on a single textbook as the source of all knowledge, etc.) do not render desired results. The studies cited above by Kalstounis support this negative evaluation. Avery, et al, in describing the impact of traditional approaches on the learning of political tolerance make a similar point:

> Although professional educators seem to share the view that political tolerance is important to a democracy, research suggests that the traditional civics curriculum does not engender a strong commitment to tolerance, particularly as it applies to unpopular ideas and groups.

Avery adds that, "In a review of the empirical studies of schooling and political socialization, Ehman (1980) concluded that conventional civics courses have little if any impact on secondary students' political attitudes."

However, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that approaches to education which stress active student involvement in the learning process (i.e., a more democratic classroom climate) do seem to more effectively teach the knowledge, skills and values associated with democratic citizenship. Torney-Purta, reviewing a cross-national study of civic education conducted in the 1970s in ten industrialized countries reported the following findings concerning the relationship between "learning conditions" and democratic values:

> The encouragement by teachers of expressions of opinion in the classroom (a measures of classroom climate) was positively related to high knowledge and less authoritarian attitudes. In contrast, students who reported extensive practice of patriotic rituals in the classroom (e.g., saluting the flag, singing patriotic songs) were less knowledgeable and more authoritarian. Both encouragement to express opinions and use of patriotic rituals were consistent predictors of greater participation in political discussions across countries. Finally, in several countries, students who reported extensive use of printed drill materials were less knowledgeable and somewhat more authoritarian.

Torney-Purta also reports on a secondary study conducted by H. D. Nielsen, using some of the U.S. and Federal Republic of Germany data gathered in her research, which found that in the U.S., the best predictors of high tolerance for dissent were: "(1) students' report that knowing causes or explanations of events was more important than memorizing names or dates . . . and (2) students' reports that they frequently brought current events up for discussion in class." In Germany, "stress on causes and explanations was the strongest predictor; the second most important predictor was the scale measuring the extent to which independence of opinion was encouraged by the teacher."

Other, more recent studies of the effectiveness of several civic education programs (*We the People ...* and *Tolerance for Diversity of Belief*) provide indirect support for the assertion that instruction which promotes active engagement of students can effective educate for democracy. Based on a 1993 comparative study, Richard Brody concluded the following concerning the Center for Civic Education's *We the People ...* curriculum:

> Students in the program are on average more politically efficacious, more interested in politics, perceive fewer limits on their freedom of dissent, less likely to be hampered by political conformity, and more likely to support freedom of assembly, due process or law and freedom of speech and press.

Brody characterized the program as one that "encourages discussion, the appreciation of others points of view, and . . . treats the student's own viewpoints with respect."

A 1992 empirical study of Patricia Avery's *Tolerance for Diversity of Belief* curriculum finds it similarly effective in achieving its main goal: increasing political tolerance. The program is based on research indicating that "a curriculum designed to increase support for civil liberties in concrete situations should focus on how the legal and constitutional framework of our society directly embodies the norms of freedom of speech and minority rights, and how these norms and laws can be applied in specific situations that test ours society's political tolerance." The developers of the program point out that, "[c]ase studies, role-playing, simulations, and mock interviews are used throughout the curriculum. . . " The authors summarize their findings as follows:

> Before studying the curriculum, the typical student scored almost two points below the midpoint of the political tolerance scale; after studying the curriculum, such a student scored almost two points above the midpoint. In other words, most students went from mild intolerance to mild tolerance, a substantively important change.

The conclusion reached by the authors who studied each of these two curriculums is the same. In the words of Brody, "Political tolerance can be taught." And, it appears that the method of instruction -- active and participatory -- contributed to the effectiveness of the program. However, this can only be surmised, as no effort was made to separate the impact of the *method of instruction* used from the *academic content* of the program. In fact, both programs offer challenging academic content, and *this* may be responsible for the observed effects. Indeed, Avery reports that, "One of the strongest predictors of posttest tolerance levels . . . is students' knowledge of the curriculum material. Simply put, knowledge of lesson content contributed substantially to higher levels of tolerance." This should serve as a reminder that *content* matters.

There is also a body of evidence that suggests that a more democratic school structure (or at least one that more vigorously and consciously promotes democratic values) can also support the development of democratic skills and values. For example, a study by Conway, Damico and Damico, demonstrated that "school organizational structure can facilitate positive cross-race interactions." The study measured the impact on racial attitudes of structuring schools under a "middle school" versus "traditional junior high school" model. Middle schools, labeled "team schools" in the study, were organized in a manner so that "teachers use more multi-task, individual, and cooperative learning activities and rely less upon recitation mode and competitive instructional formats." The "traditional schools" were "composed of predominantly same-race students with teacher-lecture and student-recitation being the primary modes of instruction." The researchers found that, "Middle school classrooms . . . are most likely to result in increased cross-race friendships."

While no one study has make all of the desired connections between classroom climate, teaching practice and school structure and the promotion of democratic citizenship, the studies above strongly indicate the links. As was also pointed out, the role of content knowledge in

promoting effective citizenship should not be discounted. What has been fairly well established is that traditional methods of instruction do not work. Civic educators will have to do much more systematic research before they can empirically establish what they intuitively believe to be the case.

Conclusion: Towards Greater Clarity

This paper began with several challenges to civic educators. I have tried to raise questions that will lead to greater clarity in formulating education for democracy programs. Being a "civic educator" is coming into vogue, and numerous programs -- dubious in conception and execution -- currently label themselves "civic education". This makes it increasingly important for those in the field to demand rigor in both our thinking about the subject and in the evidence we present to support the practice we desire. I hope this paper has made a contribution to that effort.